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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

PROBABILITY OF AN INVASION OF YUGOSLAVIA IN 1951

NIE-29

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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee have given their concurrence to the estimate. This paper is based on information available on 15 March 1951.

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PROBABILITY OF AN INVASION OF YUGOSLAVIA IN 1951

THE PROBLEM

To assess the capabilities and intentions of the USSR and its European Satellites with respect to action against Yugoslavia during 1951.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The ultimate Soviet objectives in Yugoslavia are to eliminate the Tito Government, to replace it by a regime subservient to the USSR, and to integrate Yugoslavia politically, economically, and strategically into the European Satellite structure. The USSR has not, however, indicated that it intends to try to eliminate the Tito regime regardless of the cost or within any specific period of time.

2. It is unlikely that during 1951 the Tito regime could be overthrown by a Soviet-inspired coup or by internal revolt. Therefore, the USSR would have to resort to Satellite or Soviet-Satellite invasion if it intended to overthrow Tito in 1951.

3. The continuing military build-up in the neighboring Satellite states (increase in armed forces, stockpiling, re-equipment, gasoline conservation, stepping-up of war industry, etc.) has reversed the previous balance of military strength between the Satellites and Yugoslavia and has given the Satellites the capability of launching a major invasion of Yugoslavia with little warning.

4. A major, sustained invasion of Yugoslavia employing the Satellite armies under Soviet central direction and given full logistical support by the Soviet Union has the capability of forcing the Yugoslav Army back into the mountainous region along the Adriatic and of gradually extending control of the principal communication lines to the major centers of that redoubt. The Yugoslavs would continue to resist, however, and would conduct guerrilla operations long after the collapse of formal military resistance.

5. Combined Soviet-Satellite forces could successfully invade Yugoslavia, overcome formal military resistance, and eventually render guerrilla operations ineffective.

6. Yugoslav capabilities and morale are such that substantial and continuing Western assistance in military supplies and equipment would probably enable Yugoslavia to maintain organized resistance to a Satellite attack indefinitely, at least in the mountain area. Such assistance could extend the period of resistance even in the case of a full-scale Soviet-Satellite attack. Any Western materiel sent would have to be adapted to the special requirements of Yugoslav forces. Moreover, to be effective to Yugoslavia in the initial stages of an invasion, it would have to be delivered well in advance of hostilities.

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7. Continuing large-scale Satellite military preparations indicate that the groundwork is being laid for a possible invasion of Yugoslavia. These indications do not, however, provide conclusive evidence of an intention to attack Yugoslavia since there has been a military build-up in the other Satellite states in addition to the ones adjacent to Yugoslavia and since, in the case of Bulgaria and Albania, the military preparations could point to an attack on Greece or Turkey as well as Yugoslavia. Moreover, there is no conclusive evidence that military preparations pointing toward a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia are timed for an attack in 1951. Cominform propaganda since July 1950 has consistently advanced arguments that could be used to justify a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia, but there has been no recent trend in such propaganda suggesting an attack at an early date.

8. On the basis of intelligence available we are unable to determine whether the Kremlin has made a decision to attack Yugoslavia. The Kremlin may estimate that in 1951 such an attack by the Satellites could be carried through successfully without incurring effective Western intervention or precipitating general war. On the other hand, the Kremlin may estimate that the Western Powers would give large-scale support to Yugoslavia, in the event of an attack, thereby making the operation difficult and costly and creating a greater risk of general war than the USSR was willing to accept. Finally, the Kremlin may be fully prepared for the eventuality of general war and may launch an attack on Yugoslavia regardless of the risks involved. Although it is impossible to determine which course the Kremlin is likely to adopt, we believe that the extent of Satellite military and propaganda preparations indicates that an attack on Yugoslavia in 1951 should be considered a serious possibility. We believe further that such an attack, if launched, would be made by Satellite forces with "unofficial" Soviet assistance as required.

DISCUSSION

Soviet Objectives with Respect to Yugoslavia

1. The ultimate Soviet objectives in Yugoslavia are to eliminate the Tito Government, to replace it by a regime subservient to the USSR, and to integrate Yugoslavia politically, economically, and strategically into the European Satellite structure. Soviet control of Yugoslavia would greatly facilitate Soviet efforts to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean area and would eliminate a dangerous salient in the southeast European front of the Soviet bloc. Yugoslavia would offer an approach for Soviet attacks into Greece or Italy; at the same time, it is a potential threat to the southern flank of any Soviet advance into Western Europe. Moreover, the continued survival of the Tito Government as the only Communist regime not subservient to Moscow is an ideological threat to the Kremlin's control of the world Communist movement. The USSR has not, however, indicated that it intends to try to eliminate the Tito regime regardless of the cost or within any specific period of time.

Current Strength and Stability of Tito's Regime

2. Although the Tito regime is presently stable, there are elements of potential instability in Tito's position. Among these elements of potential instability are the following:

a. A majority of the Yugoslav population are non-Communists or even anti-Communists. Living standards are lower now than

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before the war. The resentment caused by the nationalization of the economy, by the campaign against religion, and by the development of police state techniques is still strong. In the Party hierarchy there is some criticism of the maladministration of the import program and of unsatisfactory economic progress. It is always possible that some of Tito's followers, though seemingly loyal, may be awaiting an opportunity to improve their fortunes at the expense of their leader.

b. Tito's paradoxical ideological position hampers his freedom of political action. Any considerable retreat by Tito from Communist theory or practice and any conspicuous associations with the Western Powers give substance to the Kremlin's contention that Tito is a traitor to Communism. At the same time, such a retreat might cost Tito the allegiance of some of his more zealous Marxist followers who are indispensable functionaries in his totalitarian regime. On the other hand, if he adheres too faithfully to Communist dogma, he may antagonize the Western Powers and non-Communist elements within Yugoslavia whose support is essential if national independence is to be maintained.

3. Despite these elements of potential instability, Tito's regime is presently stable:

a. Yugoslavia's internal security forces are large and efficient, and have dealt successfully with active opposition elements. Efforts of the Cominform to penetrate and undermine the regime by subversive means have thus far failed. There is no evidence of effective organized opposition within the country and there are no serious personal rivals to Tito himself.

b. The Yugoslav people seem to prefer the present regime to the reestablishment of alien control from Moscow, particularly since the relaxation of some of the more unpopular totalitarian measures. Tito's bold and successful stand in the face of mounting Soviet and Satellite pressure has appealed strongly to Yugoslav national pride. Even the long-standing national minority tensions in the country are relatively quiescent. The improvement of Yugoslav relations with the Western Powers, and particularly with the US, has met favorable popular response. In the event of invasion, the majority of Yugoslavs would probably support Tito and resist the invaders.

Soviet Capabilities for Overthrowing the Tito Regime by Measures Short of War

4. Since the break between Tito and the Kremlin, an economic blockade has been maintained by the Soviet orbit countries against Yugoslavia. The Cominform nations have harassed and intimidated Yugoslav diplomats and have virtually suspended diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. Cominform propaganda has maintained a continuous campaign against Tito, and has portrayed him as a lifelong "Fascist agent" and a willing tool of Western imperialists in a conspiracy to attack the Soviet orbit. The economic pressure on Yugoslavia was a serious threat to Tito's regime until the Western Powers began to furnish support.

5. Attempts have been made, and will undoubtedly be continued, to undermine Tito's regime by the infiltration of subversive agents and saboteurs. The USSR may still attempt to stage internal uprisings in Yugoslavia, linked with guerrilla raids from the neighboring Cominform countries. It may succeed in subverting some elements of Tito's own party who may hope for an opportunity to attain power under a Cominform regime.

6. Assassination of Tito by Cominform agents is a continuing possibility. Tito's death under any circumstances would be a major blow to the regime, but would not automatically cause its collapse. Tito's chief lieutenants are as much committed against the Cominform as Tito himself. They would probably continue to adhere to the present principles of the regime. Although stresses and strains would eventually develop in the absence of Tito's strong personality and leadership, they would not in themselves be likely to cause the collapse of the regime during 1951.

7. It is unlikely that any of the methods short of war which the Kremlin may use will succeed in eliminating the present Yugoslav regime so long as Western support continues. Past Cominform pressure and the present con-

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nection with the West appear to have strengthened Tito's position with the Yugoslav people. The Kremlin will, therefore, have to resort to armed attack to overthrow his regime.

Soviet and Satellite Armed Forces Available for Invasion of Yugoslavia

8. Soviet forces presently disposed in countries adjacent to Yugoslavia consist of six line divisions—two each in Austria, Hungary, and Rumania—and are insufficient by themselves for a successful invasion of Yugoslavia. Additional forces could, however, readily be drawn from the USSR to make up a force adequate for an invasion.

9. The armies of Albania, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria have been steadily enlarged and now total approximately 460,000 men, organized in 35 divisions. Since 1 January 1950, the army strength of the individual Satellites has undergone the following changes:

	1 January 1950	*Present*
Albania	45,000	45,000
Bulgaria	87,000	145,000
Hungary	28,000	65,000
Rumania	186,000	205,000
	346,000	460,000

(In addition, the following internal security forces are militarized to a considerable degree and are suitable for combat: Albania, 10,000; Bulgaria, 43,500; Hungary, 5,000; and Rumania, 66,000. Bulgarian, Rumanian, and Hungarian army strengths are in excess of peace treaty limitations.) With partial mobilization over a period of at least 30 days, total Satellite army strength could be increased to 925,000 men, organized in 47 line divisions, 11 combat brigades, and supporting independent regiments. Additional equipment would be required, which might be supplied by the USSR. The armed forces of these four Satellites are now estimated to be equipped with approximately 1,000 tanks, and reinforcements might be obtained on short notice from the estimated 800 tanks now with Soviet forces in these Satellites. Satellite air forces total approximately 750 combat aircraft but their combat effectiveness is low. Satellite naval forces are negligible.

10. The combat effectiveness of these Satellite forces would be relatively good, provided they operated under Soviet central direction and had the major advantage of extensive and timely Soviet logistical support.

11. The armies of Czechoslovakia and Poland might provide a substantial Satellite reserve in case of need. However, the political and logistical problems involved in their use against Yugoslavia are so great that this possibility seems remote.

Yugoslav Military Forces Available for Defense

12. The Yugoslav Army has a current strength of approximately 275,000 men, organized in 33 divisions, and could be expanded in 30 days to 600,000 men organized in 40 divisions. Yugoslavia has a further mobilization potential of up to 1 million men within six months, but units beyond 40 divisions could be armed only with light infantry weapons and some field artillery. However, this additional manpower would assure an adequate flow of replacements. Yugoslav Army weapons are generally serviceable, but heterogeneous. Soviet and German World War II types predominate. Quantities are adequate to bring at least existing divisions up to T/O strength in most categories, with a surplus of small arms. Some ammunition stocks are believed to be sufficient for several months of war. However, Yugoslav combat effectiveness would rapidly deteriorate after D-day because of inability to obtain materiel to replace that lost in combat. Yugoslav combat units appear to be short of crew-served antitank weapons (including self-propelled guns) and tanks, and are seriously deficient in antiaircraft artillery.

13. The Yugoslav Air Force received an estimated 800 aircraft and a two-year level of supply from the USSR about four years ago, but this equipment is now of doubtful value for sustained combat operations. Lacking Western military assistance, the capabilities of the Yugoslav Air Force will continue to decline during 1951. As air forces in general convert to jet aircraft, the Yugoslav Air Force

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will become increasingly obsolescent. Aircraft now assigned to the air force are estimated at 650, of which approximately 350 are in tactical units.

14. The Yugoslav Navy is small and inefficient but is nevertheless capable of successfully opposing any Satellite naval operation.

15. Yugoslav forces are capable of good combat performance, and would be especially effective in the defense of the mountainous area of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Many of the officers and non-commissioned officers had combat experience in World War II and have had fairly good training since then.

16. In present circumstances, only limited improvement can be expected in Yugoslav military capabilities during 1951. The Yugoslavs are currently attempting to purchase arms and equipment from foreign sources, particularly ammunition and spare parts for Soviet and German equipment now in use. Some materiel is manufactured locally, but production is limited, and it will be some time before new equipment can be produced in adequate quantities.

Vulnerability of Yugoslavia to Invasion

17. Most of the areas along Yugoslavia's extended frontiers are highly vulnerable to invasion from the neighboring Satellite states. Northwestern Yugoslavia, including Slovenia and northern Croatia, could be quickly cut off from the rest of the country by a drive southward from Hungary through Zagreb toward Fiume. The country north of the Sava River between Zagreb and the Danube could also be easily invaded at a number of points along the Hungarian frontier. The Danubian Plain north of Belgrade is especially vulnerable to armored attacks from either Hungary or Rumania. The Belgrade area would be hard to defend against attacks across the Danubian Plain or from the south through the Morava River valley. Yugoslav Macedonia might be cut off by an attack from Bulgaria.

18. The industrial centers of Yugoslavia, on which the army currently depends for supplies, are located for the most part in the lowland areas that could be overrun soon after hostilities had commenced. A considerable effort has been made to develop new industrial installations in less vulnerable areas, as around Sarajevo. The production of these new plants would, as long as they could be kept in operation, partially offset the loss of those in more vulnerable areas. The better agricultural lands are also in the lowland areas and food would, at the outset, become a critical problem. Rail and motor routes from Trieste and Fiume could be cut off at an early stage of the operations by an attack from Hungary.

19. The large mountainous area which includes Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro is suitable for the maintenance of a strong defense. Food and munitions are now being stored in the mountainous regions, but these supplies would probably not suffice for prolonged hostilities. Defense of this area, therefore, would depend on such Western aid as could be supplied through several moderately good ports and airfields along the Dalmatian coast. Transportation facilities from these ports are, however, extremely limited. Similarly, the road and rail routes from Salonika in turn could be cut off by attack from Bulgaria and Albania.

Probable Outcome of a Satellite or Soviet-Satellite Invasion of Yugoslavia

20. The combined armies of Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and Albania, if given central direction and full logistical support by the USSR, could mount a sustained invasion of Yugoslavia which would force the Yugoslav Army back into the mountainous regions of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The Satellite forces could gradually gain control of the principal lines of communication even in these mountainous regions. The Yugoslavs would continue to resist, however, and would conduct guerrilla operations long after the collapse of formal military resistance.

21. Under present conditions joint Soviet-Satellite forces could successfully invade Yugoslavia, overcome formal military resistance, and eventually render guerrilla operations ineffective.

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22. Yugoslav capabilities and morale are such that substantial and continuing Western assistance in military supplies and equipment would probably enable Yugoslavia to maintain organized military resistance to a Satellite attack indefinitely, at least in the mountain area. Such assistance could extend the period of resistance even in the case of a full-scale Soviet-Satellite attack. Such assistance, however, would have to include aid in the form of equipment which could be readily integrated into Yugoslav units (which are now chiefly equipped with weapons of Soviet, German, and Yugoslav manufacture), would have to be delivered several months in advance of an attack, and would have to be on a continuing basis. In particular, the acquisition of certain types of equipment, such as antitank weapons and rocket launchers, could materially improve Yugoslav combat capabilities, but only after Yugoslav personnel had been trained in their use. In the last analysis, Western support would have to be on a scale large enough to neutralize the effect of Soviet logistical support to the Satellite forces.

Likelihood of Satellite or Soviet-Satellite Invasion of Yugoslavia During 1951

23. Since early 1950, there have been indications of increasing military preparations in the Satellite states. The strength of their armed forces has been substantially increased. These forces have been largely re-equipped with Soviet materiel and have engaged in increasingly large-scale maneuvers, occasionally in conjunction with Soviet occupation forces in Hungary and Rumania. Except for Albania, they have substantial numbers of Soviet T-34 tanks. Recently, JS heavy tanks and self-propelled guns have appeared with the Hungarian forces. Extensive gasoline and food rationing points to stockpiling operations. Civilian defense measures have been undertaken. Increased registration for military service, including the medical profession, has been instituted, and security measures have been tightened. There have been recurrent concentrations of Satellite troops along the Yugoslav border and border incidents have increased. There have been rumors from Cominform circles of an impending attack on Yugoslavia this spring. Cominform propaganda since July 1950 has consistently alleged that Yugoslavia intends to attack Albania and Bulgaria. For the first time, Tito has begun to admit uneasiness. He is seeking arms from Western European powers and has attempted increasingly to tie Yugoslavia to the UN program of collective security. He has improved his relations with Austria, Italy, and Greece.

24. The foregoing developments suggest that the groundwork is being laid for a possible invasion of Yugoslavia. They do not provide, however, conclusive evidence of an intention to attack Yugoslavia because there have been military build-ups in Satellites other than those adjacent to Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the preparations in Bulgaria and Albania could point to an attack on Greece or Turkey as well as on Yugoslavia. Neither is there conclusive evidence that preparations for an attack on Yugoslavia are timed for 1951. Finally, although Cominform propaganda since July has consistently advanced arguments that could be used to justify an attack on Yugoslavia, there has been no recent trend in such propaganda suggesting an attack at an early date. Despite the fact that current indications are inconclusive, however, they are nevertheless of sufficient magnitude to require that a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia in 1951 be considered a serious possibility.

25. The Kremlin may estimate that the advantages to be gained from a successful invasion of Yugoslavia would be greater in 1951 than at a later date. The Kremlin might believe that such an invasion would serve larger Soviet purposes by demoralizing and intimidating the peoples of Western Europe, by forestalling the implementation of NATO plans, and by rendering European governments susceptible to accommodation to the USSR.

26. The Kremlin may estimate further that there would be a better chance in 1951 than later that an attack on Yugoslavia could be carried through without incurring effective Western intervention or precipitating general war. The Kremlin might believe:

a. That Yugoslav forces could not maintain successful organized resistance without military supplies from the Western Powers, and

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that Western military supplies of appropriate types and in sufficient quantity probably would not be forthcoming in time to be effective during 1951;

b. That the present unpreparedness of the Western European Powers and their consequent fear of general war at this time would prevent effective UN intervention, leaving the US confronted with the dilemma either of intervening unilaterally or of refraining from intervention in order to maintain Western unity;

c. That the US, in view of its commitments in Korea and its obligations to strengthen the defenses of Western Europe, would be unlikely to allocate sufficient forces to the defense of Yugoslavia; and

d. That the American people would not countenance general war with the USSR in defense of Tito.

27. On the other hand, the Kremlin may estimate that an attack on Yugoslavia would be difficult and costly and would involve more serious risk of general war than the USSR was prepared to accept during 1951. The Kremlin may conclude:

a. That in view of US-UN action in Korea, there would be immediate intervention in Yugoslavia, thus creating a serious drain on the resources of the Soviet orbit and involving grave risk that the conflict might expand into a general war;

b. That the US would launch an immediate atomic attack on the USSR. The USSR might find support for this conclusion in the strong US reaction to the Korean invasion, the extent and speed of subsequent US rearmament, US moves to rearm Germany and Japan, public statements by certain US officials advocating a preventive war, President Truman's general warning of July 1950 regarding future Communist aggression, and Secretary Acheson's recent specific statement with respect to US interest in the preservation of Yugoslavia's independence. The Kremlin might also believe that US military leaders would welcome an occasion to use their atomic capabilities before the USSR had further built up its defensive and retaliatory capabilities.

28. Finally, it is possible that the Kremlin already is, or in 1951 will become, fully prepared for the eventuality of general war. In such a case, the USSR might launch an attack on Yugoslavia regardless of its estimate of the risks involved.

29. On the basis of evidence available, it is impossible to determine what course the Kremlin is likely to adopt. However, the extent of Satellite military and propaganda preparations indicates that an attack on Yugoslavia in 1951 should be considered a serious possibility.

30. If the Kremlin decides to launch an attack on Yugoslavia in 1951, we believe that it will probably employ Satellite forces alone, with "unofficial" Soviet aid. A Satellite attack on Yugoslavia would have the apparent advantage of great flexibility; it would offer scope for increasing or decreasing the scale of Soviet intervention and leave open the possibility of negotiating a settlement of that conflict if it threatened to expand into a general war which, at the time, the Kremlin was unwilling to accept.

31. On the other hand, it is possible that the Kremlin might decide upon a combined Soviet-Satellite attack on Yugoslavia, in the belief that it could thus achieve such prompt and decisive results as to confront the Western Powers with a *fait accompli* before they could effectively intervene.

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